
How Marketers Reach Young Consumers: Implications for Nutrition Education and Health Promotion Campaigns

Vivica Kraak
Cornell University

David L. Pelletier
Cornell University

The advertising industry aggressively seeks to understand, anticipate, and influence the perceived needs and desires of young consumers. Because marketers have taken an increasingly disciplined approach to market research, they have gained a wealth of information about children and teenagers. This paper reviews the research methods marketers use to gain information about young consumers to design targeted marketing campaigns. The paper provides an overview of the advertising techniques, styles, and channels marketers use to reach children and teenage youth. It discusses how current market research can be used in a social marketing framework to design more effective nutrition education and health promotion campaigns for young consumers.

Commercialism permeates the lives of children and teenage youth. It is generally defined as the means of communication that creates consumer awareness and induces the desire for products, thus increasing consumer demand and commercial profit (24). The Center for the Study of Commercialism describes commercialism as “ubiquitous product marketing that leads to a pre-occupation with individual consumption to the detriment of society” (16). One top executive of an advertising firm said, “It isn’t enough to just advertise on television...you’ve got to reach kids through the day—in school, as they’re shopping in the mall...or at the movies. You’ve got to become part of the fabric of their lives” (6).

Much research exists that assesses the specific influence of television advertising on children’s food- and nutrition-related decisions and behavior over the past two decades (26). Few studies or reviews, however, have attempted to examine the presence of commercialism in promotional mediums such as school lesson plans, movies, magazines, games, and kid’s clubs.

This paper describes the research methods and type of information gathered by marketers for advertising campaigns targeted to children and teenage youth. The paper also describes the advertising techniques, styles, and channels marketers use to reach young consumers. Then the paper discusses how current knowledge of market research methods, marketing

strategies, and techniques can be used—within a social marketing framework—to design more effective health promotion and nutrition education campaigns that encourage healthful eating habits among children and teenage youth.

How Marketers Reach Children and Teenage Youth

Marketers are extremely interested in children as consumers because children themselves spend billions of dollars annually, influence household purchases, and are future adult consumers (33). A lifetime customer may be worth \$100,000 to a retailer (23). Hence, the advertising industry aggressively pursues efforts to understand and anticipate the needs and desires of young consumers (23). With more sophisticated market research techniques, marketers have gained a wealth of information about children and teenagers. A review of the research methods marketers use provides insight into the type of information they seek: information that allows them to design marketing strategies for young consumers.

To obtain opinions, feedback, and insights from children and teenage youth, market researchers use various research methods. Some are focus groups, written or telephone surveys, individual or group interviews, picture drawing, story-telling, secret ballot, and observational field studies. Manufacturers and retailers will often contract with independent market research firms that have extensive experience working with children and teenagers. These manufacturers and retailers design engaging advertising campaigns to sell products or services to this lucrative market with the goal of increasing their market share. A 1990 market survey, based on the responses of 49 corporations and advertising agencies

that market children's products, revealed that \$16.1 million was spent on children's research. This research was related to product, concept, commercial tests, audience segmentation, programming, packaging, promotions, print advertisements, brand name identification, and pricing (12).

According to the marketing literature, four essential elements help marketers reach children: First, marketers keep their efforts child-focused. Second, they ask children the right questions and select appropriate outcome measures (e.g., product recognition, attention level or in-store behavior, likability rating, verbal recall, and conventional indicators of product preference). Third, marketers keep corporate attention focused on children's needs (using seminars, qualitative interviews, and periodic testing of products and communication strategies). Fourth, marketers complement intuition with theory when designing their research (15).

Market researchers caution against using standard research methods that are used with adults when children are studied. Adult marketers may understand adult consumers intuitively, but they tend to read adult meanings into what children say (15). Using conventional focus groups with children, for instance, can lead to "follow-the-leader" group dynamics. The result: Inadequate data, misleading interpretations, unhappy clients, and dissatisfied customers (30).

Experienced focus group moderators believe that overcoming the effects of peer pressure is a challenge. One way to reduce the influence of peer pressure is to ensure that the children in the group are unacquainted with each other. Moderators suggest keeping focus group members within a 2-year

age span, because younger children may be intimidated by older youth. Moderators also suggest separating boys and girls: girls tend to answer more frequently when genders are mixed (31). It is also recommended that an adult moderator be replaced with a trained youth peer to obtain more reliable information. Another recommendation: collect information in familiar surroundings such as in schools, at summer camps, or at sporting events (30).

Market researchers believe that surveys must be engaging and user-friendly. For example, the 1991 Simmons Kids Study, the first syndicated multimedia survey of children, researched the direct purchase and purchase influence habits of children ages 6 to 14 (see box). It used a "through-the-book" magazine method, a television diary, and a product questionnaire (4). Marketers also use written and visual scales, the latter designed especially for children with limited verbal skills. Smile and star scales are the most common types of visual cues market researchers use. However, market researchers also use card sorts and cartoon figures to determine product appeal, purchase influence and purchase interest, and product appropriateness based on children's age and gender (12).

By having children draw pictures, market researchers have learned a great deal about how children perceive the shopping experience. This technique, like story-telling and secret ballot, is especially useful for children who may not express themselves well verbally (22). Observational field studies are particularly instrumental in helping market researchers study parent-child interactions in stores. Market researchers operate from the premise that the purchasing process

Definitions of Key Marketing Terms

Direct purchase habits: those habits related to the purchase of goods and services that children or teenagers make for themselves.

Purchase influence habits: the array of habits related to a child's or teenager's influence on family purchases. This includes toys and clothes; housing items, televisions, and stereo equipment; and family items, vacations, and food.

Through-the-book magazine method: a research strategy that uses a magazine format to obtain personal information from children regarding product identification and preferences.

Secret ballot: a research method that asks children to make a choice and then write it down or whisper it to the researcher to keep it confidential.

Advertorial: a technique used by marketers to encourage children to read a magazine advertisement. Marketers make the advertisement look like a game, puzzle, advice column, or comic strip.

Product placement: the placement of brand name products in movies to deliver promotional messages to viewers.

tends to be more impulsive than planned. They have found that observational field studies give a more accurate picture of what influences children's consumer behavior than will verbal interviews with children, parents, or both in the marketplace. Market researchers have used observational field studies to determine which factors influence in-store decisions. Their intent was to develop new marketing strategies targeted to families with children of various ages (28).

Advertising Styles, Techniques, and Channels

Successful marketing is based on correctly representing customer lifestyles and making products relevant to their lives. A range of advertising styles, techniques, and channels are used to reach children and youth to foster brand

loyalty and encourage product use. Some approaches are market segmentation; television advertising; sales promotions at schools, stores, and sporting events; multimedia exposure; celebrity endorsement; kid's clubs; product placement; and advertorials. Also, retailers, manufacturers, wholesalers, the media, schools, and corporate donors are creating mutually beneficial partnerships to gain access to, and capture the attention of, young consumers. One of their goals is to develop a market for tomorrow's adult consumers.

Market Segmentation

The basic premise of market segmentation is that different groups of consumers have diverse attitudes, interests, and behaviors. And, by acknowledging these differences, marketers believe they can increase their chances of influencing consumers' behaviors. Segmentation

involves describing the potential market's physical, behavioral, demographic, psychographic, and geographic characteristics (25). Gender, age, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity are four ways that advertisers segment the youth market. Although marketers usually segment young consumers into three age categories (2- to 5-year-olds, 6- to 11-year-olds, and 12- to 17-year-olds), there is agreement on two points—large gaps exist in understanding young consumers' behavior and the existing age categories may be initially helpful but are arbitrary (32).

Marketers often segment age with several other factors, such as gender and socioeconomic status. Only recently have marketers acknowledged the importance of ethnic minority subcultures. Marketers tend to assume that the preferences and consumer habits of various ethnic groups are not significantly different among young children, but these preferences and habits become significant during older childhood and adolescence when ethnic and cultural identities are formed (32). The ability to understand and depict cultural nuances and the use of appropriate language are the two greatest challenges faced by marketers and educators in effectively reaching ethnic minority groups that are distinct and heterogeneous.

Television Advertising

Television has been identified as the medium that provides the widest and most frequent reach for younger children. Children ages 2 to 11 watch an average of 26 hours of television each week (6,26). In a 3-hour setting, a child may watch about 30 minutes of advertising, totaling 20-40 advertisements each hour depending on their length (26) and may be exposed to as many as 22,000-25,000 commercials each year (13). Television commercials use attention-

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getting techniques such as attractive models and familiar songs and jingles; they provide easily stored and recalled images from memory; they motivate children to retain information by highlighting the relevant, desired behavior; and they are highly repetitious (29).

Advertisers are now looking beyond children’s programs to reach the larger audience of children who are watching prime-time television or listening to the radio with their parents because it is an opportunity to reinforce the connection between children’s independent purchases and their influence on family purchases. Marketers who want to focus on children’s personal spending choose media that deliver messages to a large number of children in their desired target group. Marketers who want to take advantage of young people’s power to influence family purchases choose commercials or television programs that reach children or teenage youth together with their parents (32).

Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is a commonly used method for reaching young consumers in places where they are often found. The objectives and strategies marketers use need to be well-defined to capture the attention and interest of the desired target audience. For example, sales promotions occur at rock concerts, beaches, malls, and sports events; in stores; and even at school. They are used to motivate children and teens to make purchases at places they or their parents regularly shop, such as cosmetic counters, convenience stores, supermarkets, and fast-food restaurants. Premiums and sweepstakes prizes are often distributed to appeal to children’s and teens’ tastes and desires (27).

Manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, the media, and corporate donors frequently engage in cross-selling, the practice of combining promotional efforts to sell a concept, product, or service. Disney, for instance, has launched cross-selling campaigns worth millions of dollars to promote its films and characters in exchange for the sale or placement of other companies’ products into Disney films (7). Disney has marketing agreements with several companies, including Coca-Cola, Proctor and Gamble, Kraft, and McDonald’s.

Nationally, McDonald’s produces and delivers more than 200 different advertisements annually. This fast-food chain spends about \$740 million in advertising, has earned an internationally recognized name that is synonymous with fast-food, and has built a reputation as “the children’s marketer” (17). The company uses a multifaceted sales promotion approach to reach ethnic youth by using radio and cable television to deliver messages to African Americans and Hispanics, and it uses network television to air commercials to the general population. McDonald’s strives to make parents feel good about taking the family to the restaurant chain: both mothers and children surveyed put McDonald’s at the top of their list for likability. McMoms, a program that targets bilingual mothers of children ages 2 to 7, inserts bilingual response cards into its “Happy Meal” boxes. In return, mothers receive Spanish language newsletters and promotions. Sports, youth, and community angles are used in McMoms’ promotional advertising, which also includes scratch card contests, games on the place mats, and toy car give-a-ways (17).

Multimedia Exposure

Using television commercials to reach children and youth is rapidly becoming more expensive and less efficient. Children are increasingly being exposed to different types of mass media, including radio, magazines and newspaper sections written especially for them, and interactive computer technology (21). Although in-school multimedia can be viewed as a useful way to educate children and teenage youth, it has been increasingly criticized as a form of “commercialization of the classroom” when provided by corporations in exchange for advertising promotions and test marketing within educational environments. Because of chronic funding shortages, school districts have welcomed advertisers to underwrite the cost of educational materials, equipment, and services. Thus, school districts have been viewed as silent partners in advertising to children (7,26).

Celebrity Endorsement

Heroes, heroines, and role models can motivate children and teenage youth to buy products and services. The celebrities most admired by children are entertainers or athletes. McDonald’s and Pepsi, for example, have used Michael Jordon and Michael Jackson, respectively, to endorse food and beverage products targeted to children and teenage youth (27). Celebrity endorsements encourage children to buy products for their status appeal. The status products being marketed are costly, and celebrity commercials are becoming increasingly slick. Today’s children are contending not only with the celebrity appeal in television and magazine advertisements (7,26) but also with peer pressure from friends who see the same commercials. Children must also face the financial realities of wanting products that they do not need and/or their parents cannot afford (7).

Kid’s Clubs

Some corporations (Nickelodeon, Fox, Burger King, and Disney) have created kid’s clubs. A kid’s club establishes an ongoing relationship with its members by providing membership cards and participatory activities that are dependent on spending money. Research has suggested that kid’s clubs promote consumerism, reinforce commercial interests by building brand loyalty, and provide a convenient vehicle to deliver commercial messages and perpetuate ongoing advertising to children. Many of these clubs use their enrollment databases to distribute coupons for club merchandise (7,26).

Product Placement and Advertorials

Advertisers have paid between \$10,000 and \$1 million to display brand name products in movies, with the price increasing if an actor uses a product rather than if the product is only shown. Sometimes, movie studios and producers accept merchandise or promotional support in exchange for placing a product (7,26). For instance, Burger King was depicted in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* in exchange for promoting the movie before its release. Products can also be placed in prime-time television programs, comic strips, and video games.

The opportunity to reach children and teenage youth with print media has expanded over the past decade. Over 160 magazines are targeted to children, many of which carry hidden advertisements—in editorials, comics, games, and puzzles. The resulting advertorials or hidden advertisements have been described as “subliminal inducements” that can mislead and deceive children (7,26).

Other Advertising Styles and Techniques

Marketers specializing in advertising to children and teenage youth have learned which advertising styles and techniques work well with specific segmented groups and have provided the rationale for why they believe these styles are effective. An executive of one marketing firm offers these 10 tips to make children notice messages:

1. Be aware of age differences in the market;
2. Make sure the product or service has a point of view and a unique selling proposition;
3. Use child-appropriate language to reinforce a feeling of peer-group belonging and bonding;
4. Pay close attention to the location, sets, props, wardrobe, colors, gender, and ages of children and youth depicted in commercials to reinforce the “in” lifestyle;
5. Use music to enhance images and extend the life of a commercial beyond 30 seconds;
6. Make the commercial move because children have high expectations and are capable of absorbing much more information in 30 seconds than adults absorb;
7. Refrain from preaching because children will understand the message if they want to;
8. Use visual humor with younger children and verbal humor with older children;
9. Make the world accessible, and invite the young viewer to join in;
10. Strive for “hall talk” by making a young consumer as excited about a new commercial as the product it endorses (18).

Implications

To sell concepts, products, or services to children and teenage youth, profit-oriented corporations and marketers are conducting extensive market research. They are segmenting youth audiences; designing advertising campaigns that are language-, culture-, and image-sensitive; and tracking young consumers' responses. The food industry and marketers have been viewed by critics as failing to "play fair" and ineffectively monitoring themselves and the media to protect children and teenage youth from overwhelming commercial pressures. These critics say "unfair" marketing indicates a need for government regulation, particularly to protect younger children who may not have the cognitive abilities to discern fact from an advertisement (29).¹

Regulation is one potential approach to address intensive marketing practices. The focus of this paper is, however, to encourage nutrition educators to reflect on current approaches and consider applying what has been learned from market research to create more effective nutrition and health promotion messages. We encourage nutrition educators to use a variety of channels to deliver those messages and to identify common interests with the public and private sectors to deliver consistent messages.

¹The public policy issues and alternatives related to children's advertising via television is beyond the scope of this paper but has been extensively documented. Government regulation of television advertising has been difficult to implement in the United States because of the protection of advertisers' First Amendment rights. Historically, there has been only voluntary regulation of advertising for specific products (e.g., alcohol and cigarettes) or images advertising these products (e.g., Joe Camel) that have been deemed to be socially "evil." For a comprehensive review of these issues, see Armstrong, G.M. and Brucks, M. and also Huston, A.L. et al. (2,14).

It may be strategically necessary to create partnerships with stakeholders who are also concerned about the influence of commercialism on children and teenagers because public health budgets are insufficient to compete with the multimillion dollar campaigns of manufacturers and marketers. The next section examines how market research methods and the knowledge gained from marketing strategies and techniques can be used advantageously to design and deliver more effective health promotion and nutrition education interventions. Effective interventions, in this case, are ones that encourage healthful eating and lifestyle habits among children and teenage youth.

Using Market Research and Advertising Techniques to Design Nutrition Interventions

Many nutrition education programs are based upon health-oriented models that emphasize the underlying cognitive, psychological, and environmental influences on dietary behaviors and lifestyles (11). Consumer-oriented models emphasize information and skills that are instrumental in the marketplace. Market research can provide a wealth of information to nutrition educators about how young consumers view the world and function within it. Consumer behavior research and communications research can provide useful information on children's and parents' attitudes, perceptions, and behavior and provide information on media channels that can best reach targeted groups. These types of research can be viewed as stepping stones to link scientific findings about diet and chronic disease effectively to the desirable food- and nutrition-related perceptions, attitudes, motivations, decisions, and behavior of young consumers.

Public health practitioners have increasingly turned to communication programs as a major strategy to prevent the premature morbidity and mortality associated with chronic diseases in adults. Social marketing is explicitly based on marketing principles. It is one example of a communications program that provides a framework and guidelines that nutrition and health educators can use systematically to address problems related to health promotion and dietary behavior. Social marketing is most often used to accomplish the following objectives: to disseminate new information to individuals, to offset the negative effects of a practice or promotional effort by another organization or group, and to motivate people to move from intention to action (25). This type of campaign directed specifically at children and teenage youth could introduce and disseminate new ideas. It can increase the prevalence of desirable behavior among these target groups.

Social marketing originates from marketing theory with one important difference—the changes in a population's behavior result in the "profits" for individuals and society. For nutritional well-being, the "profits" are to produce healthier children who will become more productive and healthy adults, while simultaneously serving to reduce health care service needs and related costs. Social marketing provides a framework from which behavior-change strategies are formulated and translated into specific and integrated interventions aimed at certain behavior changes. Interventions may include mass media campaigns, interpersonal communications, public policy interventions, school-based interventions, and the use of community-based coalitions to implement a variety of organization-based actions (1,20).

Social marketers point to the success of this approach because it offers benefits people want, reduces barriers people face, and persuades instead of just informs. The 1995 Gallup Organization Survey, Food, Physical Activity, and Fun: What Kid's Think, revealed a large discrepancy between what children understood and said were healthful eating principles and what they practiced (3). Social marketing proponents believe a successful social marketing campaign for young consumers is not about selling pre-formulated ideas about desirable nutrition habits. They believe it is about creating food and nutrition concepts that conform to a particular target group's expressed desires, values, and tendencies (1,20).

In conducting a comprehensive analysis for a successful campaign that uses social marketing principles, campaign developers seek to identify the basic components of business marketing within a public health context. Four marketing "P's" can be used as a foundation for planning a social marketing program:

- *Product*: this may be defined not only as a service but also as an idea, concept, social cause, or behavior change;
- *Place*: the distribution channels that will be used to get the product or messages to the target audiences;
- *Price*: the social, behavioral, psychological, and geographic costs for the consumer to adopt a behavior; and
- *Promotion*: the communication tools used to increase acceptance and use of a product, tools such as advertising, public relations, and consumer incentives.

Politics is added as a fifth "P" that evaluates the political environment within which a campaign functions. If there is weak internal agency support or external community or government support for a social marketing campaign, the probability is low that the campaign will be successfully implemented (25).

These principles are well-illustrated by the USDA Team Nutrition Campaign. The mission of this campaign is to build skills and motivate children to make healthful food choices by reaching them through multiple channels, in a language they speak, and in ways that are engaging and entertaining. No one message or single delivery strategy will adequately meet the communications objectives of this type of campaign. Thus, the Campaign uses social marketing principles to reach children through the mass media, in schools, and at home to impart knowledge and build skills children need to make healthful food choices (5).

Developers of the USDA Team Nutrition Campaign have identified the *product* or offering (e.g., selecting more fruits, vegetables, and grains and eating less fat to improve health) for two audiences: the primary segmented audiences (e.g., children and teenage youth) and secondary target audiences (e.g., parents, educators, and school food service personnel). The secondary audiences act as influentials for the primary audiences. The *place* (e.g., mass media, schools, and homes) has also been identified (5). The knowledge that marketers and nutrition researchers have gained about children and teenage youth can provide important insights about *price* (e.g., young consumers' perceived benefits and barriers to eating more healthfully) and *promotion* (the communication channels and tools that have the most credibility for these groups) (1,20,25).

It may be strategically necessary to create partnerships with stakeholders who are also concerned about the influence of commercialism on children and teenagers, because public health budgets are insufficient to compete with the multi-million dollar campaigns of manufacturers and marketers.

An organizational-based strategy for addressing the fifth “P,” *politics*, also needs to be devised. The USDA Team Nutrition can be a successful public-private partnership of government agencies, the food and agricultural industries, education, school food service, and health and consumer groups joining together to improve the diet and health of children (5). The partnership will be successful if organizational incentives are created to identify common interests, if organizational obstacles and disincentives are appropriately identified and managed, and if healthy communication is fostered among the array of stakeholders (10,19).

Market research can also provide useful information about the nature and extent of the marketing competition and the additional consumer behavior research that is needed to design an effective and sustainable campaign. The techniques used by market researchers can give nutrition educators new approaches to obtain information from children and teenage youth to tailor and deliver, more effectively, nutrition and health promotion messages that capture their attention and influence their behavior. Manufacturers, retailers, market researchers, and the media may be more amenable to entering collaborative partnerships with nutrition educators when common interests are identified and win-win situations are pursued. This approach is preferable to nutrition educators attempting to compete with commercial advertisers. However, partnerships across sectors present many challenges, including the potential for compromised credibility, implied endorsement of specific products, issues of exclusivity, and inequities of decisionmaking (19).

Addressing Perceived Benefits and Barriers

How can young consumers be motivated to change their eating behavior to approach the recommendations outlined in the Healthy People Objectives 2000 and the Dietary Guidelines? Telling them of the risks to their health or discussing the nutrient value of foods has not been effective (20). Behaviorally focused nutrition education targeted to children uses such strategies as exposure to foods in a positive social context, modeling by peers and adults, and appropriate use of rewards (8).

The message must identify the explicit rewards or incentives and barriers that are perceived by this targeted audience.

- Messages must be simple, strong, repetitive, consistent, and specific about desired behavior (e.g., time of day, location, and qualities of food used as snacks) (20).
- Messages must promote rewards in terms of taste, which is a more significant motivator than are the nutritional benefits of food (9).
- Messages and images must be upbeat to engage and excite children and teenagers.
- Messages must convince children and teenage youth that selecting healthful foods like fruits and vegetables is simple to do.
- Messages must be presented in a catchy and easily remembered format such as “Eat five a day the easy way,” an approach that has been used by the National Cancer Institute’s 5 A Day for Better Health social marketing program.

The information provided by market research can be used to craft nutrition and health promotion messages aimed

at children and teenagers. For instance, this research has revealed that young children identify more with product brands than with food categories, enjoy independent shopping experiences, communicate their needs by pointing to what they want, and are attracted to displays and packaging that provide opportunities for color-learning, shape-naming, story-telling, or animal identification. Older children and teenagers like to “belong” to a group, are strongly influenced by peer pressure, and like to exert independence as they age. Also, their preferences are more readily influenced by ethnicity and culture than is the case for younger children. Both groups like to receive product samples, prizes, and gifts. They respond positively to messages that use familiar vocabulary (27).

Barriers to young consumers’ ability and desire to change their food- and nutrition-related decisions and behavior include nutritious foods not being readily available at home, in school, and in other settings; misperceptions about healthful eating; and aggressive promotion of unhealthful foods through commercial efforts that use a variety of communication channels (3). The research methods used by marketers can provide further information on

- these and other barriers and benefits children and teenage youth believe influence their ability to eat more healthfully;
- what they think will make healthful eating more fun, exciting, entertaining or rewarding; and
- the concepts and vocabulary that are needed when designing and pretesting nutrition and health promotion messages targeting different age groups.

Presentation Context

Marketers recognize the importance of presentation context on young consumers' ability to encode and retrieve knowledge. This is especially relevant when designing advertisements that use the appropriate vocabulary; move quickly; and have the right location, set, props, music, wardrobe, and colors reflecting a desirable lifestyle or product (18).

The influence of television commercials on children's nutrition knowledge suggests that different types of messages produce a "continuum of impacts." Scammon and Christopher (29) found that messages for sugared products tended to reinforce previous pro-sugar consumption messages to which children had been exposed. Exposure to commercials for healthful nonsugared foods did not always lead to increased consumption of healthful foods but appeared to reduce further consumption of sugared foods. This suggests that multiple, complementary methods, besides advertising (e.g., environmental support), are necessary to promote the consistent consumption of healthful foods by children and teenagers.

Separate nutrition messages were the most effective short-format messages in terms of children's verbalized snack selections and nutrition knowledge. Pro-nutrition messages that are aired on television compete with other advertisements for the attention of young viewers, so it is important that nutrition messages are comparable in technical and creative quality, interest, and variety. Public service announcements must be broadcast at times when children are likely to be exposed to them and aired repeatedly to ensure exposure and to reinforce desirable messages (29).

Communication Channels

Marketers can use different levels of intervention to reach various target audiences with messages, programs, and services. The individual-level targets are children and teenage youth, and the network-level targets are peer groups, families, and social networks. Organizational-level targets are restaurants, grocery stores, schools, and school cafeterias; and community-level targets are the media, public opinion, social norms, local legislation, and food producers (25). The message from the advertising industry to us is this: To have a successful social marketing program—one that effectively influences the eating behavior of children and teenagers—we must use multiple and reinforcing communication channels and approaches.

Summary

This paper describes the research methods used by marketers to gain specific information about young consumers—information that is used to design targeted marketing campaigns. Nutrition knowledge is a necessary but insufficient factor that can be used by nutrition educators to influence positively the food- and nutrition-related attitudes, decisions, and behavior of young consumers. Nutrition educators must use the knowledge gained from marketing and communications research to design more effective nutrition education and health promotion campaigns tailored for children and teenage youth (8). This paper discussed the range of research and marketing strategies the private sector uses. We believe that health and nutrition educators can take advantage of this sector's knowledge and expertise and the substantial investments it has made generating this knowledge.

This review indicates that a successful nutrition and health promotion campaign must consider appropriate methods of communication; preferred sources of information; credible sources and role models; and images of self, groups, and society. A social marketing campaign may be a useful component of a larger action plan that fosters partnerships among a variety of stakeholders who are committed to influencing positively the total food and nutrition environment of young consumers. This approach includes working collaboratively with potential allies and stakeholders who are interested in building or strengthening children's and teenagers' ability to become informed consumers in the marketplace.

This collaborative approach has a great advantage for the nutrition community. It has the potential to leverage the substantial resources of the portion of the private sector that has an interest in promoting improved nutrition and health. Collaboration, however, challenges nutrition educators to think and to act creatively, strategically, and nontraditionally to coordinate successfully efforts to improve the health and nutrition needs of our Nation's children and teenagers.

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